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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: NOVEMBER 25, 2009

Summary: Reports and photographs of President Obama's meeting with Indian Prime Minister Singh, and his (Obama's) remarks that "Pakistan has an important role in S. Asia," and the "U.S. can't resolve India-Pakistan issues" received extensive media coverage. Newspapers reported Ambassador Holbrooke's statement, confirming Saudi a role in talks with Taliban and that the "U.S. would support any Saudi initiative." Commenting on the subject, "Dawn," noted that "the Obama administration and those involved in back-channel probes must realize how dangerous it would be to quit Afghanistan in a manner that leaves the Taliban in a dominant position." The government's announcement of conciliation package for the long-ignored Balochistan province dominated all front pages on Wednesday. The Foreign Office Spokesman's remarks, accusing India of "preparing for a limited war" were also widely reported. End Summary.

TOP STORIES

News story: Pakistan Has Important Role In S. Asia: Obama "Dawn" (11/25)

"U.S. President Barack Obama on Tuesday re-emphasized Pakistan's key position in the American strategy for South Asia, telling a joint news conference with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that Islamabad had an enormously important role in the security of that region." (Story also covered in all newspapers)

News story: U.S. Can't Resolve India-Pakistan issues: Obama "Daily Times" (11/25)

"The United States cannot play a role in resolving the outstanding issues between India and Pakistan, U.S. President Barack Obama said on Tuesday. The U.S. President, who had extensive discussions with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the situation in South Asia, said, 'Obviously there are historic conflicts between India and Pakistan. It is not the place of the U.S. to try, from the outside, to resolve all those conflicts.'" (Story also covered in all newspapers)

TERRORISM/MILITARY ISSUES

News story: U.S. Confirms Saudi Role In Talks With Taliban "Dawn" (11/25)

"U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke has confirmed that Saudi Arabia has initiated a dialogue with the Taliban and that the United States would support any Saudi initiative. Separately, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said that the United States is open to the prospect of Afghan

government's talks with elements of the Taliban, but she advised Kabul officials to proceed cautiously."

News story: FO Accuses India Of Preparing For Limited War "Dawn" (11/25)

"Pakistan accused on Tuesday India of 'preparing for a limited war' against it and asked the international community to take notice of New Delhi's 'long-term intentions.' 'Major powers have a particular responsibility in this regard,' Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit said. He was commenting on reported remarks of Indian Army Chief Gen. Deepak Kapoor, in which he had warned that a "limited war under a nuclear overhang is still very much a reality in the subcontinent.' (Story also covered in all newspapers)

News story: Obama Wants To Finish The Job In Afghanistan "Dawn" (11/25)

"U.S. President Barack Obama said on Tuesday he intended to 'finish the job' in Afghanistan after eight years of conflict there. Speaking at a press conference with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Mr. Obama said he would announce his long-awaited new strategy for the Pak-Afghan region soon."

News story: Obama's Afghan Strategy Decision 'Within Days' "Dawn" (11/25)

"President Barack Obama has concluded months of deliberations on whether to send thousands more troops to Afghanistan and will announce his decision within days, the White House said on Tuesday.... Obama is widely expected to announce his decision next Tuesday, possibly in a nationally televised address."

News story: Four NATO Supply Vehicles Torched "Dawn" (11/25)

"Gunmen in Balochistan torched four vehicles carrying fuel for NATO forces in Afghanistan, police said on Tuesday. The attack took place overnight in Jafarbad district, some 400 kilometers south of Quetta."

News story: Blackwater's Secret War In Pakistan? "The News" (11/25)

"At a covert forward operating base run by the U.S. Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in Karachi, members of an elite division of Blackwater are at the centre of a secret program in which they plan targeted assassinations of suspected Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives, "snatch and grabs" of high-value targets and other sensitive action inside and outside Pakistan, an investigation by Jeremy Scahill of the U.S. based magazine 'The Nation' has reported."

News story: 39 Militants Killed In Orakzai, Hangu, SWA "The News" (11/25)

"Thirty-nine militants were killed by security forces in different areas of South Waziristan and Orakzai tribal regions and the adjacent Hangu district on Tuesday. Tribal and official sources said helicopter gunships pounded the hideouts and compounds of militants and destroyed seven hideouts and four vehicles owned by the militants." (Story also covered in all newspapers)

News story: Twenty-Three Terrorists Killed In Bara Operation "Dawn" (11/25)

"Security forces killed at least 23 terrorists and 36 suspects arrested during a fresh operation in Bara tehsil of Khyber Agency on Tuesday. The troops were backed by helicopters, tanks, armored personnel carriers and heavy artillery, a press release issued by the Frontier Corps media cell in Jamrud said." (Story also covered in all newspapers)

Editorial: Covert Talks, an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (11/25)

"Reports that America is engaged in back-channel talks with the Afghan Taliban through 'neutral players' should come as no

surprise.... Do you talk to the enemy from a position of weakness? Or do you talk from a position of strength? To think that Hamid Karzai could help in this regard is to be naive.... All one hopes is that a phony peace will not be achieved for the sake of a hurried withdrawal to placate an increasingly skeptical public in the West. The Obama administration and those involved in back-channel probes must realize how dangerous it would be to quit Afghanistan in a manner that leaves the Taliban in a dominant position."

Editorial: A Sensible Way Out, an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (11/25)

"The report that the Americans have been engaged in secret diplomacy with the Taliban for the past six months, with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Britain actively assisting the various interlocutors, should be greeted with a measure of relief and satisfaction.... After having been eight years in the Afghan blind alley, with Bush's so-called 'coalition of the willing' either falling apart, as some countries withdraw their forces and others persist in their attitude of cosmetic participation, the U.S. finds itself faced with growing calls for an early exit. Saner analysts have been warning the U.S. President of another Vietnam should he only choose to listen to his generals who are in the habit of asking for the deployment of more and more soldiers - as it was in the case of Vietnam, so it is in the present case.... Thus, the rationale for talks to devise a sensible way out."

Editorial: U.S.-Taliban Secret Talks, an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (11/25)

"Speculations about talks with the Taliban started many months ago and were denied feebly. That U.S. public opinion was growing weary of the war in Afghanistan was also not lost upon observers. The details of the matter, however, leave more questions than answers to the lingering problems that triggered the conflict in the first place.... The exit strategy, whatever its actual features, will leave behind traces of doubts and apprehensions. Will it mean a return to the previous Taliban regime with a horrendous human rights record? With several regional actors on the scene, will Pakistan be able to safeguard its legitimate interests in Afghanistan? With the U.S.-NATO forces gone, will it be possible to keep the Taliban and al Qaeda genie at bay? The accommodation of the Afghan Taliban in the power corridors of Kabul may leave the future of al Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban intriguing nightmare. Undesirable haste in leaving Afghanistan may prove as perilous as entering Afghanistan without the necessary homework proved."

Editorial: Now Pakistan Too Should Engage Taliban, an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (11/25)

"It was in the air for the last some time that the United States was engaged in back channel talks with Taliban but now it has been confirmed that the U.S. has entered into secret negotiations with Afghan Taliban in a bid to find a way out of the existing mess in the war-torn country. Reports trickling down from different sources suggest that some of the ground rules for future dtente are being worked out and these include guarantees on the part of Taliban to ensure peace in Afghanistan in return for a U.S. deadline for withdrawal of the occupation forces.... But now that the United States has been forced to pursue the path of dialogue as part of the exit strategy, Pakistan too should review its plans. This is because a vast majority of Taliban are not terrorists but have simply been hijacked by those who are advancing foreign agenda in the country. There is a danger that the menace of terrorism would continue to spread in the country until and unless right political moves are also made to address the issues involved."

Editorial: Implications of Covert Negotiations With Taliban,, an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (11/25)

"In order to exploit the natural resources of the central Asian states, Washington is convincing the Taliban for playing a new role. But the regional powers including Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan and even India are fully aware of the U.S. intentions. We think that the government of Pakistan must persuade its well-wishers in Washington

to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan as soon as possible."

Editorial: Indian Brinkmanship, an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/25)

"India's military leadership has once again raised the issue of Limited War being a viable option within the overarching nuclear environment.... Both Pakistan and India need to realize that nuclear antagonists cannot be locked in a zero sum game environment. Their survival is linked together now. So nuclear deterrence requires the prevalence of conflict and common interest between the two sides."

Editorial: Full Or Partial Nuclear War: India Will Be Responsible, an editorial in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (11/25)

"Indian military Chief General Deepak Kapoor said that South Asia is emerging as a center for instability and disputes.... There is a danger of limited nuclear war in the region.... India imposed 1965 and 1971 wars on Pakistan. Pakistan was dismembered in 1971. If now India sees the danger of a limited nuclear war then only India would be responsible for that.... Kashmir dispute is the root cause of problems, disputes and conflicts in the region. The region would become cradle of peace if this dispute is resolved."

Editorial: Limited nuclear war in South Asia?, an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (11/25)

"The views expressed by Indian Defense Minister and Army Chief vis-à-vis limited nuclear war can best be described as irresponsible and irrational. How did the Indian leaders conclude that in case of a nuclear conflict in the region India would be safe and that this war will be limited? This is clear that Indian leaders want to give some message to Pakistan. Pakistan does not want war and wants to resolve all issues, the Kashmir dispute, distribution of river water and Indian interference in Balochistan, through dialogue."

Opinion: The Next Phase Of Counter-Militancy, an op-ed by Dr. Maleeha Lodhi in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/25)

"The battle has therefore to be fought on many fronts, and it is the government that must step up and take responsibility to establish the structures for governance and the means to deliver services to the inhabitants of these areas if conditions are to be created to prevent the return of militancy. Military action, after all, is only one prong in an optimal policy response. Looking ahead, the two key factors that will help determine the longer-term sustainability of the military gains in South Waziristan are unrelenting and vigorous efforts to mobilize public support for the anti-militancy effort and putting in place the governance structures that are seen as legitimate as well as responsive to the needs of the people living there."

Opinion: Driving The TTP Out, an op-ed by Zafar Hilaly in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/25)

"By driving the TTP out of their strongholds in South Waziristan the army deprived them of the use of a safe haven, training facilities, bomb-making laboratories, etc. They also forced the retreating TTP to abandon a sizeable amount of weaponry and explosives, all of which will have to be replenished at considerable cost and much travail.... The TTP must know that if they are not going anywhere, nor is the army; and that, until such time as they relent, surrender or are defeated, neither will the army. What bodes well for the future is the acceptance by the public of the legitimacy of operation Rah-e-Nijaat."

Opinion: Quitting Afghanistan, an op-ed by Bassam Javed in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/25)

"The Obama administration in the United States is currently engaged in rethinking a fresh Afghan strategy aimed at securing an exit without losing face.... Whatever decision is made on the number of additional troops for Afghanistan, it certainly will have repercussions for Pakistan.... As far as the U.S. administration is

concerned, the realization that stability in Afghanistan can only materialize once they pull out is a good omen. However, a hasty and ill-planned withdrawal will have disastrous effects not only for Pakistan but for the region as well."

Opinion: India's Dangerous Games, an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (11/25)

"It is fascinating to watch the Indian propaganda machine come into full play as it is a field in which India excels unlike in the realm of dialogue and peace where India has always been found wanting as the neighborhood will testify - from the small neighbors to China. Once again, instead of seeking to move towards substantive peace through resumption of dialogue with Pakistan, we are witnessing the propaganda machinery in all its full glory with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Washington.... It is no wonder then that India is not willing to talk peace and stability with Pakistan. Encouraged by its strategic partnership with the U.S., which has allowed India all manner of leeway to continue its hostile Pakistan posturing.... India's aggressive designs have never been clearer. Are we as clear, not only in our counter strategies but also in devising some proactive policies to counter this threat from the eastern front?"

Opinion: Singh's Unabated Duplicity With Pak, an op-ed by M. Ashraf Mirza in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (11/25)

"Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has once again resorted to the traditional Indian duplicity, distortion and double standards by talking of peace with Pakistan as well as about his country's 'willingness' to resolve all outstanding issues with Islamabad through 'bilateral dialogue.'... It's hoped that President Obama's administration will not be swayed by the Indian Prime Minister's calculated campaign and will take an objective view of the ground realities of the South Asian region. Pakistan is the pivot for peace, security and stability in the area. If it fails, India and other regional countries and even Europe and America will not be safe from the scourge of terrorism and militancy.... As a matter of fact, it's in America's own interest to restrain India from its dirty conduct because once Pakistan is handicapped, weakened and destabilized, the number of body bags going back to the U.S. from Afghanistan will swell manifold."

Opinion: Need For A New Social Contract, an op-ed by Saleem Safi in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (11/25)

"The Americans have begun efforts to study thoroughly the social fabric, history and political dynamics and variations of Pakistan, particularly that of the Pashtoon belt. They are making contacts from the prayer leaders to the politicians, and from schoolteachers to the journalists. They are using lucrative benefits to entice these people in order to hire latter's services. The brilliant minds among these hired people are being shifted to Washington and Europe against hefty salaries. This practice has gained such a tremendous momentum that an ordinary journalist, like me, is also getting offers, almost every month, to work in the U.S. or Western media. Moreover, Voice of America (VOA) is operating three Pashto-language radios from Washington. It has now become crystal clear that the U.S. will have to leave this region sooner or later, but Washington is working to intrude, socially as well as culturally, into every house, mind and institution of our country."

ECON/BUSINESS

News story: U.S. Signs MoUs With Pakistan's Corporate Sector For Provision of Clean Drinking Water "Jang," "The Statesman" (11/25)

"The U.S. government and the Corporate Sector Organizations signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) in Islamabad on Tuesday to support safe drinking water and hygiene promotion through water testing kits and the introduction of water purification sachets to clean water in homes that aims at benefitting one million people."

POLITICAL

News story: Govt. Offers Olive Branch To Balochistan "Dawn" (11/25)

"An offer of dialogue with 'estranged brothers', promises of probes into political murders, army pullout from a key area, halt to new cantonments and more local control on resources marked a conciliation package for Balochistan that the government unveiled in Parliament on Tuesday. The Prime Minister made the offer of dialogue as part of his government's aim to 'heal the broken hearts.'" (Story also covered in all newspapers)

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson